COVID-19 and Your Mental Health

While we are familiar with viruses like the common cold and the flu, the coronavirus (COVID-19) is new and presents a situation that none of us could have imagined a few short months ago. The fact that it is extremely contagious has resulted in business closures, social distancing, and quarantine measures which have disrupted our daily lives. It is more important now than ever to pay attention to mental health during this time of isolation and uncertainty.

One of the most frightening things about COVID-19 is that it is about the virus and the limitations on where you can go or cannot go. However, there are things that you can control, and focusing on those things can provide you with some comfort. Some of the things you can control include:

- Keep a healthy diet
- Exercise at home
- Get enough sleep
- Do not smoke or drink alcohol excessively
- Maintain self-care and personal hygiene
- Keep your house, your bedroom, your closet, your kitchen – now is the time to clean and get organized
- Make responsible choices about when to leave the house and only go out if necessary
- Limit the number of people you come into contact with
- Work from home if you are able to
- Don’t oversleep your news and information intake
- Get your information from reliable sources like the CDC or WHO
- Watch TV, movies, and videos that make you feel good
- Keep 2-4 weeks of food on hand
- Avoid overstocking on supplies that are in high demand so other people can have enough of the essentials too
- If you take medication, get refills and keep a month’s supply at home if possible
- Regularly wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Avoid greeting people by shaking hands, kissing or hugging
- Keep 6 feet of distance between you and anyone who is coughing or sneezing
- Stay home if you are sick aside from getting medical care
- Cover your coughs and sneezes
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces
- Follow the “Stay at Home” guidelines
- In extreme cases of anxiety, people may experience a panic attack. Panic attacks are often mistaken for heart attacks at first, but usually go away when people are able to talk to someone else to calm their fears and practice deep breathing.

If you’re taking steps to manage worry and anxiety during the COVID-19 crisis but they don’t seem to be helping, there are additional resources you can take advantage of.

Mental Health Screening

- If you are in crisis or or thinking about suicide, get connected to a local crisis center and get in touch with someone immediately.
  Call 1-800-273-8255 (TALK) or text “MHA” to 741741.

Find more information and resources about COVID-19 and mental health at mhanational.org/covid19.